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ABSTRACT

Extracurricular activities have long held roles of importance in independent school life. However, schools often assign teachers to oversee extracurricular activities as an afterthought and provide limited resources for extracurricular programs. This paper considers the integral role of activities in independent schools and presents theories of leadership as they apply to students and adults in independent school culture. The paper offers an overview of the history of extracurricular activities in high schools, and then discusses the findings of interviews conducted with five student-council presidents at five day schools regarding the effect of school culture on student participation and leadership. The following recommendations are made for private schools that want to encourage student involvement: (1) examine the school culture; (2) provide student councils with substantive issues to tackle; and (3) specifically address leadership issues. (Contains 59 references.) (LMI)

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STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:

Culture Created in Schools

Esther A. and Joseph Klingenstein Fellows Program Project
1997

Submitted by
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PREFACE

In beginning this research project, my intent was to examine the conscious development of student leaders and why independent school student councils struggle as productive student organizations. Recognizing that public schools often pride themselves on mobile, large, organized and effective student councils, I have been consistently puzzled by the marginalized, ineffective feelings in students that participate in many independent school councils. Through my search, however, I discovered research on adolescent leadership and extracurricular activities in schools that attempt to address much larger issues than the student council, and yet hold many interesting implications to my original inquiries.

Extracurricular activities have long held roles of importance in independent school life. Although usually described as "outside" the curriculum, they are integral in promoting school spirit, loyalty and leadership in the student body.[1] In addition, they have long been considered to encourage a healthy mind and body in students by providing a communal outlet for young energy. Further, students involved in extra-curricular organizations often later sight their experience participating in them as essential in their development of leadership and personal skills.[2]

However, in spite of their significance to private schools, teachers (other than athletic coaches) are often assigned to guide extracurricular clubs and

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[1] Throughout this paper athletics will be described as an activity that is extra-curricular, though most independent schools include PE in the curriculum, only some require that students play on athletic teams.

activities as an after-thought and rarely compensated for their extra time. Also, the activities often have quite limited resources. It seems independent schools would be served well to look closely at their activities, how they mold leadership, and what implications school culture has in predetermining who will participate and lead successfully.

For these reasons, my project considers the integral role of activities in independent schools and present theories of leadership as they apply to students and adults in Independent school culture. Finally, although leadership can take on many forms (both positive and negative), for purposes of this paper, I am discussing leadership in the context of an elected position or an ability to influence followers in a positive way.

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[2] A. Vail and S. Reddick. Characteristics and Experiences of Leaders Who are Alumni of Vocational Student Organizations (ERIC 1992) ED 354364.

INTRODUCTION

> The headmaster played on Deerfield teams until he was about 35, and was head coach of football until he was nearly eighty...(although) his sense of (the sport) was always vague but imaginative. Visitors today sometimes think that the headmaster is a little theatrical when he walks up and down the sidelines - eighty-six years old, and wearing a player's duffel coat that almost reaches the ground - -and acts as if he were on the verge of jumping into the game.[3]

Often thought to have captured the quintessential leadership style of the school head, John McPhee's description of Frank Boyden at Deerfield Academy also illustrates the long-standing tradition extracurricular activities have had in independent schools. Athletic teams, newspapers and others are essential to the spirit and purpose of school life. However, traditional schools have begun to reexamine some of their original practices. Few schools today can afford to have heads, as intimately involved as Frank Boyden, in the daily lives of their students, for school leaders have increasingly complex jobs as financial officers. As institutions begin to rethink the role of the head's leadership, they also need to examine the changing aspects of student leadership and the extra-curricular activities that shape that leadership through student participation.

Essential to the prep school experience is the making of "renaissance" men and women. Many schools' missions avow the development of heart, mind and body. There is little doubt that prospective students are drawn by the possibility of participation in all aspects of school life, something that large public schools cannot guarantee. Also, in a modern sense, activities provide depth to traditional curricula. Long before Theodore Sizer wrote about "exhibitions" in

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[3] John McPhee. The Headmaster. (New York: Noonday, 1966) 28-29.

school curriculum, sports, theater and yearbooks were enhancing "cooperative work", "experiential" education and public exhibition.[4]

As such integral parts of their schooling, its surprising how little examination schools do of activities as part of their education. Teachers usually run them with little or no experience in the field (like McPhee's' gracious description of Boyden's "vague but imaginative" knowledge of football), and are rarely compensated for their work - which is mostly accomplished at the end of the academic day and often on weekends. In addition, aside from seasonal sports and theater productions, most clubs and organizations meet in cramped-makeshift spaces for less than one period a week.

In spite of issues of adult supervision, compensation and space, the result of this disorganization has been generally one of benign neglect. In the past decade studies consistently show that extra-curricular involvement leads to successful leadership in later careers.[5]

However, this success also bares examining, particularly in the area of student leadership. Although major changes have taken place from the classrooms to the business aspects of independent schools, extracurricular activities remain largely untouched even when activities have a lasting and deep impact on school culture and student leadership.

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[4] Ted Sizer emphasizes exhibitions as a key formula in school curriculums in The Coalition of Essential Schools. He based the concept students reporting to him that the most significant aspects of their high school experiences came from extra-curricular activities.

[5] Vail and Reddick, ED 354364

History of Extra-curricular Activities in High Schools

Early history of high schools provides an interesting blueprint for they way activities are run today. Before the 1900's there was little distinction between private and public schools, for all were select institutions where entrance was by examination and standards were high. Although drop-out rates were around 30%, those who were able to make the grades were treated with respect.[6] Student papers were often read uncensored in public school meetings. Debating societies that involved both students and teachers regularly invited specialists from the local area to join them in topic discussions.[7]

However, schools across the country began to change between the 1880's and 1915, and public schools in particular began to grow in size. Soon their role shifted from educating the strongest (and perhaps the most affluent) students for leadership to preparing masses of them for citizenship.[8] Standardized rules began to appear for student conduct, faculty bathrooms were installed, and teachers stopped calling students "Mr." and "Miss".[9] As schools became large, more bureaucratic institutions, studentship became less a source of prestige. Disciplinary issues were on the rise, and students and teachers began operating in an ever widening gap.

It was in this moment of change that student-run organizations began to emerge in the late 1890's. They started secret societies, newspapers, journals,

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[6] Thomas Gutowski, "Student Initiative and the Origins of the High School Extracurriculum: Chicago, 1880-1915," History of Education Quarterly vol. 28 (1988) 50.
[7] Ibid. 51.
[8] Ibid. 52.
[9] Robert Reid, "The Professionalism of Public School Teachers: The Chicago Experience 1895-1920" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1968).

athletic associations - all student initiated, run and financed. The extracurriculum became a school centered organized social life.[10] High schools, in an attempt to gain control over student actions started student governments. Initially designed to bring order to the student body, classes elected aldermen who passed ordinances and then enforced them through the use of student monitors. However, as described by Thomas Gutowski in Student Initiative and the Origins of the High school Extracurriculum, "the effectiveness of the student government was limited by the lack of ultimate sanctions with which to back up disciplinary actions of the student courts and by superintendents such as Ella Flagg Young, who thought them a sham and a vehicle for clique rule."[11] Hence the blueprint of the impotent student council emerges early in its inception as an attempt to recreate student involvement in a modernizing school.

Private schools were also gaining ground in the education surge of the late 1890's. In contrast to public schools at the time, many were founded precisely to continue the prestige of student membership and mindfully raise future leaders.[12] In turn, they easily cultivated intimate relationships between students and teachers in atmospheres relatively free from bureaucracy. Student leadership was less obvious, though some schools followed the old British model of "prefects" as school monitors. At Deerfield, Frank Boyden was not interested in changing his paternalistic family structure to include student leadership, and he, "(held) himself distant from that sort of thing. Senior class

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[10] Gutowski, 67
[11] Ibid. 56.
[12] Ibid. 66.

presidents (were) elected on the eve of Commencement...students (said) they would not want student government anyway, because they feel it is a mockery elsewhere."[13]

Like early public schools, private schools carefully fostered a sense of belonging by narrowly defining a set of cultural norms clearly identified the student with the institution are abandoning this imposing style because of its clubishness. Recent trends have lead to private schools seeking greater diversity in the students and cultural ethos. In addition, schools have become more attentive to the individual needs of each student. Student differences are now more a cause of celebration than an obstacle to uniformity, and, in these schools, Frank Boyden might find it hard to hold such a tight grip on students today.

Extracurriculars, however, have not seen change as dramatically as the rest of school culture. The "prefect" structure (where 3-5 students are elected or appointed as heads of the school and regularly meet with Deans) still is common in most boarding schools and student councils, regardless of their success, continue at virtually every school. A closer examination of activities and their role in shaping student leadership is timely. Significant research on adolescent leadership and the impact of school culture on student's lives are useful tools for independent schools to rethink this cardinal aspect of their education.

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[13] McPhee, 26.

Student Councils and their Struggle for Meaning in Private Schools

I was elected just because I gave a funny speech. I know that because all my friends came up to me after the elections and said so. Its probably not really good that you get elected out of cleverness, I mean, other candidates were much more serious and purposeful.

I thought I could really make some changes, but now that I am the President, there aren't that many changes to make. I understand why the school has to do things the way they do, and I generally think it's a good place. Other kids come up to me a and gripe about stupid things, but I don't think we should just waste time. ..the administration makes the important decisions, and anyway, you can leave if you really hate it here.

I don't do anything that anyone else couldn't do. I talk with the Deans and the Upper School Head about issues kids raise-or they talk to me. There is no reason why any other kid couldn't do it.

Basically, we don't do anything except plan dances and parties. When really important things come up they get taken away from us, and when we try to do something, usually it gets stalled somehow. Most of the kids at school are mad at us because they say we are lame and don't fight for student power. We'd never get elected again if we ran.[14]

In speaking with student council presidents at five day schools, their reactions about being a leader and working on the student council have a similar sense. All these leaders feel marginalized, and for several reasons which are analyzed below, the structure of the student government feels false.

- students do not feel they have the power to make significant change, nor do they feel included when significant change occurs
- they are in what they feel is a "false" position of importance that gives them no more access to faculty than any other student in school
- they are chosen because they relate to the faculty, but then they feel removed from the student constituency and are forced into a position of "we-they" when they assume their role

Private schools, because they are small, intimate places, have particular struggles with traditional student government designs, and often, in their attempt

[14] Interviews with five student council presidents at two private schools in Minnesota, two in New York City and one in New Jersey. They were all seniors in the 1996-97 school year, they had all been elected by the Upper School or Upper and Middle Schools and they all had to give speeches for their election.

to provide a venue for student voice result in frustrating student's sense of their enfranchisement in school.

Several recent educational studies help to clarify the peculiarities of small schools and the impact of their culture on students in activities. First, a study entitled "Effects of School Size Upon some Aspects of Personality", described that small schools offer greater "richness" of experience through a wider range of activities, a greater number of key positions available, greater warmth, and greater press for achievement.[15] In this atmosphere, other researchers describe a "manning" principal takes effect.[16] Students attending small high schools report an especially strong feeling of obligation to participate in student activities. Unlike large schools, where there are a number of students hoping to fill one position, small schools are "undermanned", and in order to fill essential positions, schools press students into participation.[17]

These findings are logical, for in a scientific sense they articulate the traditional strengths of most private schools. However, "richness" and "manning" have their drawbacks as well. Research continues to find a higher degree of alienation among students from schools with these traits. In a study on "School Size and the Importance of School Activities," findings led to the conclusion that greater pressure towards success in all small-school activities resulted in greater alienation among those students unable to achieve

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[15] W. J. Campbell et al, "Effects of School Size on some Aspects of Personality," The Journal of Educational Administration vol. 19, no. 2 (1981): 203.
[16] Laura Berk and Barbara Goebel, "Patters of Extracurricular Participation from High School to College," American Journal of Education, (1987): 470-471.
[17] Ibid. 469.

success.[18] Further, students presently involved in activities are particularly sensitive to their own enfranchisement, and they feel marginalized easily when their involvement seems meaningless in school culture. Researcher Raymond Calabrese, described this feeling of alienation in his recent school research:

> Many schools and families claim that adolescents are indeed incorporated into the decision-making process; however, in the school context their involvement is often limited, arbitrary, and offered to those whose value systems most nearly reflect that of the school. Student Councils and class officers most often debate non-issues rather than those which affect their lives on a deep level...(those) debates should include teachers, parents, senior citizens, and legislators.[19]

Therefore, the intimate cultural atmosphere of a small school can be both the most significant asset of private schools and their greatest liability in attempting to give students more enfranchisement in school.

Other research indicates that giving student government real meaning in the context of any school is extremely difficult. In "Group Process and Adolescent Leadership Development," researchers explain, "even the most innovative schools...have institutional guidelines and demands that severely limit the extent to which a youngster can engage in serious social enterprise (because) attention is shifted rapidly each day through a welter of subjects, locations and significant persons."[20] However, these studies also indicate that to have successful, fulfilling student involvement, the structure of the activities needs to change.

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[18] Mark Grabe, "School Size and the Importance of School Activities," Adolescence, vol. 17, no. 61 (1981): 29.
[19] Raymond Calabrese, "Adolescence: A Growth Period Conducive to Alienation," Adolescence, vol. 22, no. 88 (1987): 936.
[20] Mary Hohman et al, "Group Process and Adolescent Leadership Development," Adolescence, vol. 17, no. 67 (1982): 614.

First, the selection of leaders and participants does not always yield the most qualified and interested students. Surveys show that both participants and non-participants feel many officers in student organizations tend to become officers "in search of popularity, of qualifying credentials for non-school positions, or of psychological satisfaction of inner drives, not because of a desire to learn or serve."[21] Further, students, once selected may not have enough practice at the skills they are asked to use. In a leadership study at Mary Institute, a private girls' school in St. Louis, Missouri, the student council was primarily responsible for social activities and when they were consulted by the administration on discipline issues, "they tended to be too harsh or inconsistent in their judgments."[22] These two examples reveal not only problems with leadership selection in most school student councils, but also confusion about the actual role of student-run government in school.

This confusion in part is derived from the particular culture of small schools. Private schools pride themselves on close interpersonal relationships between students and adults. As the presidents who were interviewed described, this dynamic seems to stop at the student council. Not only do they feel marginalized when important school decisions are made, but they recognize that other students can easily speak with teachers about issues - and solve them - without ever needing the structure of student council. These factors

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[21] Norma Walters and James Wilmoth, "Leadership Attributes and Personality Preferences of High School Student Leaders in Health Occupations of America," Journal of Vocational Educational Research, vol. 14, no. 1 (1989): 50.

[22] Deborah Stiles, "Leadership Training for High School Girls: An Intervention at One School," Journal of Counseling and Development vol. 65 (1986): 211.

contribute to the uselessness officers feel, and most likely, to the expedient reasons with which they chose to involve themselves.

Activities similar to student councils in which students have a greater sense of accomplishment tend to be disciplinary committees and peer counseling groups. Both activities involve students more actively and in more immediate ways in private schools than student government. Also, teachers report that students tend to value membership in these organizations more highly than student council, and in turn, take more care in who gets chosen to be leaders and officers.[23] The success of these types of groups may also lie in the simple fact that students experience direct results from their decisions and actions (through either disciplinary action or improvement of a students' well-being) more than in student council, where students will often spend political and emotional energy debating issues that never get realized.

However, in spite of the indication that student government is generally unsuccessful in private schools, student voice in school decision-making needs to be preserved. Student councils, disciplinary committees and peer counseling all share one unique aspect in their role as student activities. It is in these venues that schools both shape and, at the same time, utilize the moral and ethical skills of adolescents. No better model for learning on the job exists. The delicate balance of trust, combined with control, needed to involve young people in important matters at school is precisely what gives students in these

[23] Private school administrators and teachers who are Klingenstein Fellows at Teachers College, Columbia University, when asked about how they perceived students felt about the significance of student councils in comparison to disciplinary committees and peer counseling groups in their schools.

activities an ultimate sense of enfranchisement. Successful organizations that resonate with these qualities not only affect the students involved, but give the entire student body a sense of belonging and importance. Certainly students in the earliest high schools felt prestige in studentship because they were involved with faculty in decision-making. In the same light, activities, particularly in small schools, that do not embody these traits of trust and importance can result in a sense of alienation or falseness in both the officers and other students.

Therefore, the task remains for private schools to redefine student government in both form and function. To do this well, school culture and its influence on ideas about leadership and power needs to be examined in the context of private schools.

School Culture as it Influences Adolescent Leadership

In the heart of the campus at Deerfield stands the statue of the "Deerfield boy" a symbol of the ultimate blending of scholarship and athletics. Still a tradition in the 1990's, a decade after the school has included girls, is the simple act of rubbing the statue's nose for good luck and strong will, a hope that some of its perfection will wear off on the generations that reside in the school's halls today. Though few private schools have such a literal product of the scholar-athlete mold, most traditional schools subtly or overtly have a defining concept of the ideal student. This concept plays an important role in shaping

and reflecting each school's culture. In this act of definition, the concept of the ideal student also influences who in the school will be leaders and who will not.

Research on students' extracurricular involvement in small schools reinforces their importance in symbolizing school culture. Recent studies showed that the "manning phenomenon" in activities that occurs in small schools carries with it important values of "centrality" (importance to the organization) and "elasticity" (capacity to absorb more participants) that affect the ethos of the school.[24] Research demonstrated that the more central and less elastic activity (i.e. the school newspaper) had a greater effect of manning, and activities that were both central and elastic (like athletics) were the most popular among students and had reduced effects of manning. In turn, it was discovered that students involved in the most central and elastic activities gained the greatest self-confidence and sense of achievement as a result of their participation.[25] Though this explanation seems logical, its implications loom large, for example, for females and male non-athletes in a school where the football and boy's ice hockey teams are the most "central" in school culture.

Other, earlier studies, support these findings. In a 1969 project on "Student Activities and Self-concept," a significant positive relationship was found between extracurricular participation in important school activities and self-esteem scores.[26] In addition, "male first-string athletes had higher than average

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[24] Berk and Goeble. 470. The studies were actually done by Morgan and Alwin (1980) who conducted many case studies and experiments to explain the impact of small schools and large schools on high school participation.

[25] Ibid. 482.

[26] R.E. Phillips, "Student Activities and Self-concept," Journal of Negro Education, vol. 38 no. 1 (1969): 32-37.

self-esteem than second-string athletes and non-athletes...(but) no significant relationship was found for girls."[27] The researcher concluded from his findings that activities that led to publicity (like the concept of centrality) in that school, such as boys athletics and music activities, were likely to increase self-worth.[28]

Also helpful in understanding the ways school culture shapes students is the concept of James Coleman's "leading crowd" in his landmark study The Adolescent Society. Coleman set out to study what factors most influenced adolescent culture. He discovered that the student body in most schools had developed the phenomenon of the "leading crowd." This group of "elites" as Coleman described them, subscribed to specific behaviors that predicted general school culture. In his definition, Coleman describes these behaviors as:

> ... the best exemplar of the norms and values of student culture...Elites tended to be more parent -oriented than all other students at the most parent oriented schools and less parent oriented than all other students at the least parent-oriented schools. (Further), leading crowds surpassed all students in their schools in the choice of the popular "star-athlete" image for boys and the "most popular" image for girls.[29]

Although Coleman contended that standards of acceptance are established by peers, and that participation in peer-valued activities is associated with greater peer approval and higher self-esteem, there is little doubt in his explanation that schools shape peer influences. Not only does he describe elites as more or less parent-oriented than others at their schools (suggesting a school ethos),

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[27] Ibid. 36.
[28] Ibid. 37.
[29] Jere Cohen, "The Impact of the Leading Crowd on High School Change: a Reassessment," Adolescence, vol. 11 no. 43 (1976): 373-374.

but he acknowledges throughout his research that schools promote activities which then gain peer approval.

The concept of the leading crowd has been hotly disputed in recent years, but for the purpose of this paper it is a thought provoking idea. It suggests, regardless of exacting research techniques, that schools create cultures which impact not only how involved they will be in that culture, but whether they will become leaders or gain greater self-esteem from their participation.

The most significant findings in recent studies on extracurricular participation in small schools trace the correlation between involvement in high school and college. Several recent case studies report that students from the smallest sized high schools declined the most in participation from high school to college. This trend indicates that enriched "extracurricular experiences of small high schools do not carry over to college extracurricular participation under circumstances where strong environmental press is absent."[30] Not only are these results surprising, but they shed new light on the concept of environmental press (or school culture) on students in small schools. Although leaders in small schools may compete less than their large school counterparts - and therefore may have less refined leadership skills to carry on to college - they still have involved themselves more deeply in the school. If this "manning" effect does not have a lasting influence on individual students in their participation, than involvement in small school activities is much more a result of school "culture" than individual student interest or ability.

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[30] Berk and Goebel. 483.

This precept of environmental influence on students is particularly critical when coupled with the implications it suggests in research on girls' participation and leadership in activities. In the studies comparing high school and college participation, results showed that although, during high school, females participated in a greater variety of extracurricular activities than did males, they declined more than males in frequency, variety and extent of participation after entering college.[31] The researchers suggest that

> ...stable involvement of males in academic honors and student government from high school to college, as compared with females' decline, may be explained by sex differences in socialization that emphasize mastery, achievement, and internal locus of control for males leading to greater self-confidence and competitiveness. In a large multipurpose university setting, where there is little external support in the form of direct encouragement for scholarship and leadership, students must rely on earlier developed supports.[32]

This statement clearly indicates that boys are receiving the benefits of greater self-esteem and confidence from their participation in small school activities, for it assumes that boys have "earlier developed supports" in high school that are more conducive to later leadership - and girls are without those supports. This may be because, as previous studies have explained, boys participate in more central activities (or central activities are male ones) that carry weight in school, such as stable involvement in boys' athletics, academic honors and student government. Hence, it is also logical that these studies found there was no significant relationship between self-esteem scores and extracurricular participation for girls.[33]

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[31] Ibid. 482.
[32] Ibid. 483.
[33] Phillips. 36.

So, as research has implicated, there is a correlation between school culture, activity centrality that predicts that culture, and who participates in extracurriculars. For example, in schools where boys' athletics have centrality (football night games), the boys involved are more likely to feel confident about themselves, be popular, and therefore are more likely to gain leadership positions at school.

Thus private schools, in spite of their efforts of reform towards greater gender equity and diversity, are still linked to formulaic ideals in their student body that manifest themselves through school culture. As schools continue to examine how to serve all students on their campuses well, extracurricular activities and the role they play in reflecting school culture need to be included in the inquiry. Also necessary in a school's understanding of how its culture predicts leaders is a knowledge of adolescent leadership and what research today reveals about its characteristics.

Several studies in the past 15 years have focused on adolescent leadership and what qualities distinguish those students from others. One 1992 study on rational thinking states that adolescent leaders are more "psychologically healthy" and less "irrational" than their non-leading counterparts.[34] Students who are leaders in this study explain their rational perspective by stating "that people should go beyond that which they think they can do," which researchers say reflects a sense of confidence and strong ego development.[35] These

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[34] G. Barry Morris, "Adolescent Leaders: Rational Thinking, Future Beliefs, Temporal Perspective, and other Correlates," Adolescence vol. 27 no. 105 (1992): 173-174.
[35] Ibid. 178.

leaders in this particular study participated in an average of three school-related activities, with sports as the major interest area.

In addition to gaining self-confidence, students who participate in activities tend to also gain greater social success than other students. Most students studied in a 1995 project on adolescents' social goals by Jarvinen and Nicholls believed that "sincerity and consideration for others feelings lead to social success."[36] In addition, they found that students who were tracked lower academically (and alienated from school) tended to place less value on leadership and popularity among peers, to be less sensitive to being teased, and to not believe that sharing feelings with peers is a way to be socially successful. This conclusion, Jarvinen and Nicholls explained, suggests that "low track students have more problems not only relating to teachers but also to other students in the school."[37] Not only do school cultures impact individuals thorough tracking, but they may affect students' senses of themselves and their abilities to relate to other students in school.

Studies in the mid 1980's in Sweden reveal parts of the dynamic between leaders and followers in school. Findings indicated that teen-age leaders dominated both the psychological and physical space of the classroom. This behavior was manifested through seating arrangements and activity in the classroom.

> while ordinary pupils were reproached when they were late for a lesson, leaders could enter the classroom late without comment from the teacher...Leaders were

[36] D. W. Jarvinen and J. G. Nicholls, "Adolescents' Social Goals, Beliefs about the Cause of Social Success and Satisfaction with Per Relations," Developmental Psychology (1995): 440.
[37] Ibid. 440.

> also "allowed" to leave the classroom more frequently than others...moved about in the classroom more extensively than other pupils.[38]

This is not surprising information, for most people can remember their school days when certain student personalities would dominate the class. However, in the context of school culture and its influence on leadership and participation in school, these findings would suggest that leaders play an active and daily role in perpetuating that culture which identifies them as important.

Beyond the cultural context of leadership, theories that describe successful leaders and their skills also provide insight into the kinds of leaders we are producing in our students. Schools historically have promoted trait theories; those ideas that leaders have certain inborn and learned personality traits, such as charm and courage, that make them successful. Students who have them immediately rise to the top of activities. However, trait theories have given way to newer ideas about leaders and their styles of leading in certain situations. Schools need to expose students to many different ways of leading in order to provide equal opportunities for leadership.

Theories of Leadership and their Manifestation in Private Schools

There are several contradictory theories about what makes a good leader. One, for example, is that leaders are born, and not made - that leadership is an individual trait and those people who have a particular set of characteristics will consistently rise to the top in organizations like schools. Historically, many great

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[38] Kjell Granstrom, "Interactional Dynamics Between Teen-age Leaders and Followers in the Classroom," Journal of School Psychology vol. 24 (1986): 336.

independent schools are the result of great leaders, according to the biographies of Deerfield and Andover. John McPhee writes of Frank Boyden at Deerfield as one of several leaders "who created enduring schools through their own individual energies, maintained them under their own absolute rule, and left them forever imprinted with their own personalities."[39]

On the other end of the spectrum, there are theories that anyone can be a leader, and that situations, not individual traits, define who becomes one. Between these divergent points is a wide range of combinations called contingency theories.[40] In this range, almost anyone can become a leader under beneficial circumstances, yet some personal and individual traits are more regularly identified with leadership. Also according to this theory, leadership can be taught, but the learning is not limited to a set of codes since how well the leader does is contingent upon the situation.[41]

Although generally contingency theories are considered to be the most supported, students in studies tend to refer back to individual "trait-like" descriptions of leaders when asked to describe successful ones.[42] However, if leadership is based on adapting to situations, then understanding leading styles and the relationship of styles to situations is very important. Many textbooks cover these concepts of styles which are organized through different concepts than individual-situational models.[43]

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[39] McPhee. back cover.
[40] Gary Yukl, Leadership in Organizations, Prentice Hall: New Jersey (1994).
[41] Blank. 208.
[42] Ibid. 207.
[43] Yukl, 21.

Styles can range from an authoritarian approach - the leader in complete control, to a laissez-faire style. Between these extremes in the democratic style - in which the leader culls opinions and makes a consensus-oriented decision. Also involved in leadership style are the aspects of social emotional or task oriented leadership. Social emotional leaders are consistently concerned with the well being of their followers, and good leadership is conceived of through having followers feel supported. Task-oriented leadership is oriented towards efficient work, specific tasks and performance of followers.[44]

The most significant and useful research on adolescent leadership and how these leadership theories play out in high schoolers' thinking was conducted by Thomas Blank in 1986. Interviewing 165 leadership oriented juniors and seniors from private (60%) and public schools (40%), Blank found that these students had conservative and narrow views of successful leadership.[45]

Specifically, his study revealed that these high school leaders were dedicated to democratic, social-emotional leadership style that is almost completely achieved through personality type. Charisma, and sensitivity to these students are among the most important traits for adolescent leaders. He explains further,

> The data show where to begin with leadership training and highlight the requirement to deal in detail with the contingency theory, situation emphases and subsequent need for flexibility rather than the over-development of one style, alliance , force of personality or charisma...(clearly) a fair number of these leaders have already found themselves at a

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[44] Blank, 208.

[45] Thomas Blank, "What High School Leaders Think of Leadership," High School Journal, Feb./March (1986): 208.

> point at which they realize the skills of personality needed to become a leader or to get the job done may not be identical to those needed to be popular or a "well-liked" leader.[46]

Thus, these students, the majority from east coast private schools, reflect their traditional school cultures which tend to rely on trait values of leadership as the sole components of successful leadership. Entrenched in these beliefs, as Blank discovers through his research, these students are also unable to see other possibilities outside of pure force of personality and individual qualities that may serve them well. Blank suggests that they discover, through their positions of authority, that some of their traits which benefited their selection are not as strong resources once they begin to act in their positions.

Near the end of his study, Blank suggests that students be given leadership training on contingency theories to counter act their myopic and unhelpful view of good leadership. As this paper suggests, simple training will not correct the narrowness of leaders that private schools intrinsically and extrinsically encourage. Instead, schools need to examine their practices in regard to culture, extracurricular activities and leadership to gain a greater understanding of the subtle forces which play on their student body.

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[46] Ibid. 213. A description of the questions and answers in this study are presented in the end of the paper for further reference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Private schools have unique cultures, often different from one another, but even more different from public schools. and often recommendations and activities that apply well to public high schools are not as easily replicable in independent schools. The following recommendations are provided with a particular understanding of private schools and their cultural ethos. In general, recommendations run along the lines of schools assessing their culture and how it may impact the development of their students in extracurricular activities and as leaders. To emphasize student involvement in school structuring, administrators, teachers **and** students can all participate in evaluating their schools' biases and determining if they are wanted or unwanted.

I. EXAMINE THE CULTURE OF SCHOOL

A. How are students chosen for positions of leadership in school?

I have created five (5) categories:

- elections
- apprenticeship
- application
- appointment by peers or teachers
- volunteer
- innovation (creating new activity)

All forms of selection should exist in schools. When one form dominates, then one type of student usually gets to lead more often. Use this list as a check list to see how many forms of selection exist at your school. I suggest changing forms within activities. This might allow a different mix of students to participate in leading different activities.

note: girls and cooperative leadership skills
Research already noted, particularly Calabrese 1986, indicates that some females may need more opportunities for cooperative and noncompetitive problem solving for their leadership skills to develop. His research showed many girls joining service projects in leadership positions, where they had not been involved in extracurricular activities prior to the service programs in schools. He concludes, "this may be an indication that school environments may be geared towards males."[47]

[47] Calabrese, "Effects of Service Activities on Adolescent Alienation", pg. 685.

B. Examine the "centrality" and "elasticity" of the school's activities

The concept of "centrality" and "elasticity" were developed by researchers Morgan and Alwin in their studies of high school size and participation in extracurricular activities.[48]

- centrality = relative importance to the school
- elasticity = capacity to absorb more participants

Each of these concepts has overt and covert implications. Good school surveys will catch both meanings. Some constituencies will see *importance* in terms of fame and number of spectators, others may see it as essential to the education of students, still, for others it may be measured by the popularity of the individuals involved. *Elasticity* may be the actual feasible capacity, or the social implications of joining, or the reverence with which membership is held.

This is an ongoing and necessary process that schools should return to every five years. What administrators think are the most "central" activities may not be what the students think. Be sure to **survey** all constituencies of the school, alumni, students, and teachers.

note: there is an obvious regional effect on culture
Often cities and regional areas of the country place a certain emphasis on high school activities, particularly sports. In Minnesota, for example, the high school boys ice hockey state tournament holds more importance than any professional sport. Pay particular attention to how your school responds to external cultural pressure from the community to emphasize particular activities.

C. How does your school manifest the "manning effect ?"

"Manning" as described by Morgan and Allwin, is the phenomenon of small schools developing an environmental press of students into activities to be sure that each activity will function with enough student involvement.

Consciously observe how your school supports and identifies leaders in activities. How do students chose which activities to involve themselves, how much of a role do parents play? how much of a role does school culture play? How does your school schedule support all activities?

How are leaders identified? Are they successful in a range of activities or only specific ones? Examine the patterns developed in your school and the inherent biases that may result from that pattern.

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[48] Berk and Goebel, pg. 470.

D. Pay particular attention to ninth (9th) graders involvement in school activities.

Important research by Vernon Gifford and Marjorie Dean in 1990 investigated the success of ninth graders in extracurricular activities between those attending junior high school and senior high school. The results overwhelmingly supported ninth graders in junior high school for participating in extracurricular activities and scoring high on self-perception tests.[49]

Specifically, these studies demonstrated:

- ninth graders in junior high school participated more than those in senior high school
- achieved higher GPA's than ninth graders in senior high school
- had better attitudes towards self and school as measured by the SURPO than ninth graders in senior high school.

Although private school size benefits ninth graders by inviting them to be members of a smaller community, the added academic pressure and manning effect of involvement in school can be overwhelming to students in ninth grade.

This research suggests that private schools pay particular attention to the patterns of ninth grade involvement in activities, and to encourage possibilities for leadership that may be just for that age group. Patterns of alienation and leadership may be set early in students' high school careers. Private schools have the capacity to help encourage proper development.

II. Student Councils need substantive matters to tackle

Private school student councils face little success for a variety of reasons:

- participants don't feel they have power to make significant change
- their position and title feel false
- participants can feel forced into a position opposing the faculty
- schools have institutional guidelines that limit how engaged a student can be in change within the school
- students run to win popularity contests, not out of a desire to serve

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[49] Vernon Gifford and Marjorie Dean, "Differences in Extracurricular Activity Participation, Achievement, and Attitudes towards School between Ninth Graders Attending Junior High School and Those Attending Senior High School," Adolescence vol. 25, no. 100 (1990): 799.

- once selected, participants may not have the skills to do the work well.
- disciplinary committees and peer counseling groups are taken more seriously by most students

A. Survey students: If you are unsure how students in your school feel about student council, you should survey both the members (with questions about their perception of what they are doing) and the student body in general. be sure to ask about election procedures, productivity, ability to make significant contributions to school.

B. Survey or meet with faculty:
Plant the seeds to begin a faculty-student group that would act as council and liaison for both the students and faculty and administration. Discover issues that faculty perceive as mutual for both students and themselves.

C. Throw out the bath water (keep the baby)...
Even if the structure of student council is not effective in your school, the need for some form of student government is essential. More appropriate designs, based on research findings, may lead to more involved and meaningful participation by students.

Raymond Calabrese, concluding his reassert on adolescence, wrote that schools can do a better job in "integration, assimilation, meaning, and enfranchisement."[50] In doing so, he said that they need to create activities that:

- integrate age groups
- bring those groups together in many settings
- work closely with adults on issues outside the classroom that are meaningful to students
- enfranchise them in community decisions

D. Create a "guild" of teachers and students who will contribute to major school decisions.
Instead of a student-run council, schools might think about creating a faculty and student group, or "guild" that acts professionally about some major decisions for the schools. I borrow the focus of this concept from Jay Newman's research on involving students in schools restructuring.[51] One might begin by:

1. assess the culture of your school by asking members to explain how things get done there.

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[50] Calabrese, pg. 936.
[51] Newman, pg. 19.

2. Identify formal and informal leaders among students and teachers
3. recruit as many of these leaders as possible to look at the self-study and analyze its results.
4. develop major ideas from the results about things that need to be accomplished in school
5. work to help faculty perceive their place with students on this guild

This committee is a guild because they are a group with similar interests in the betterment of school. Using some of Calabrese's ideas, this group would act as a uniting factor for students and faculty. They might have greater responsibilities than the traditional student council in some regards and less in others. Their responsibilities may include:

- having a budget and fund from which they grant awards to students and faculty who want to start new activities, trips and programs.
- working on issues of discrimination, kindness, classism, gender issues, community service, racism, and health.
- setting yearly goals that match that of the school administration, and articulating planned activities and action with the Upper school head and head of the school.
- acting as the student/faculty body that runs elections for those activities that have them, welcomes freshmen, and serves a specific role in graduation, or other school traditions
- planning social activities, political debates, assembly speakers on topics of mutual interest.
- Recognizing achievements of students and faculty that may otherwise go unnoticed in the bustle of school days.

III. Specifically address leadership issues

A. Discuss and exemplify differing styles of leadership among faculty and students who participate in school activities

These concepts concern the process of leading more than the "qualities of being a good leader," as in trait theories. Styles of leadership range from tight control to loose control, much like styles of teaching, and they can be equally appropriate under certain circumstances.

Schools should acquaint all students (not just the ones designated as leaders) with these varying styles and the implications of each style-perhaps even emphasizing adults in the community who devoutly follow one style over another. The styles, as researchers identify them fall under these categories:

- authoritarian -social/emotional
- democratic -task oriented
- laissez-faire

Students who can observe these styles may be able to practice them and envision themselves as leaders in a broader sense than narrow cultural definitions of personality or trait theories.

B. Introduce students to the implications of the "leader-follower" relationship as a discussion topic in all activities

Psychiatrist Margaret Rioch wrote a defining piece on the leader-follow relationship, that has certain implications for adolescence who are both leaders and followers.[52] She begins by remarking how many times she encounters someone whom she followed devotedly years earlier and wonders how she could have attributed such extraordinary qualities to him or her (an experience most adolescents have often in high school). Her points are simple:

- "leader" does not have any sense without the word follower implied in it. Most human relationships can be looked at as variations on the themes leadership-followership.
- *charisma* is not in the leader, but in the follower-leader relationship
- power and strength of a leader is based on the weakness and helplessness of the follower

By learning different theories about why people lead and why they follow students will gain a broader perspective of the human dynamics that are involved in both actions, thus broadening the possibilities for leadership and followership.

C. Use the "leader-member" approach as a discussion topic in all activities as an effort to cultivating leadership in all aspects of the student body

The leader-member approach is very similar to the other approaches presented here in that it does not separate the leader from the follower. Leadership training, in its purest form, has implications of separation that seem unhelpful in small independent schools. Therefore, this approach oriented towards "group process" is most conducive to the private school environment.

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[52] Rioch, Margaret "All We Like Sheep-Followers and Leaders," Psychiatry vol. 34 (1971): 259.

Introduced by the High Scope Summer Workshop for Teenagers, the leader-member approach is based on the concept that "leadership development cannot be separated from group training and development....Leadership always involves leader-member relations..."[53] The concepts are based on these precepts:

- allow for substantial periods of planning
- take group meetings seriously by limiting distractions
- successful group development is essential to successful leadership development
- role of leaders can change within the group if it chooses
- cooperative groups support outreach rather than exclusiveness
- mistakes are allowed
- groups should be purposefully coed and include all ages where possible.

Conclusion

Research on independent school culture is extremely limited, but recent studies on small public school activities hold valuable information for private schools. Studies such as Morgan and Allwin's, that indicates small high schools send fewer leaders on to college extracurricular activities than large high schools, have heavy implications for private schools. By following the recommendations above and examining recent research (regardless of it's origin in small public schools), independent schools can break out of their traditional practices in extracurricular activities and begin to develop student leaders that more accurately represent recent efforts towards diversity in their cultures. Leadership and participation in school activities are such essential aspects of the independent school experience that they deserve more close examination.

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[53] Hohmann, pg. 614.

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